



Happier Together

Social Cohesion* and Well-being in Europe

Georgi Dragolov, Jan Delhey
Jacobs University Bremen

* The Cohesion Radar project was carried out in collaboration with Klaus Boehnke, Zsofia Ignacz, Jan Lorenz

37. Kongress der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie
Trier, 09 October 2014

Social Cohesion Radar Measuring Common Ground

An International Comparison of Social Cohesion



Cohesion Radar: Measuring Cohesiveness

Social Cohesion in Germany –
a preliminary Review



Radar gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt messen was verbindet

Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt in Deutschland

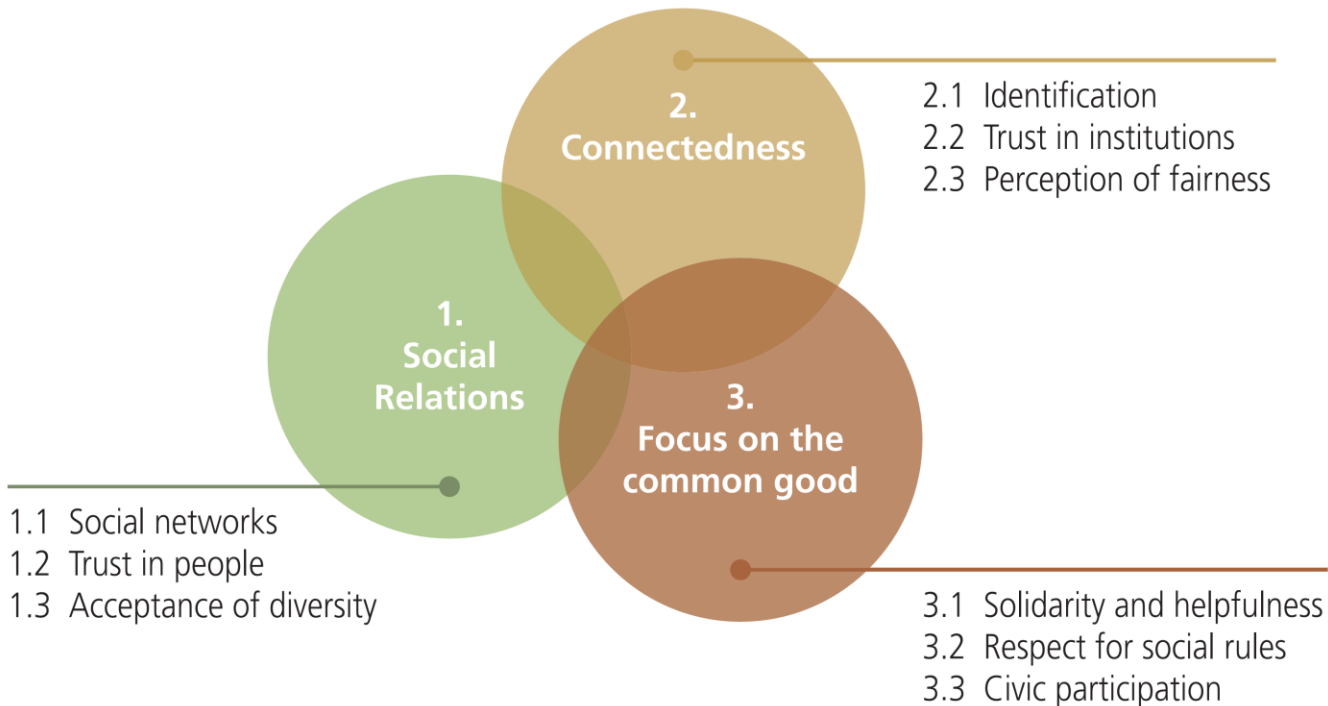


A Metaphor on Cohesion



What Is Cohesion: Our Definition

Characteristic of a collective
Multidimensional
Measured at the micro, meso and macro levels



Domains of Cohesion (1)



1. Social relations

create cohesion through a network of horizontal relationships between individuals and societal groups of all kinds, which is characterized by trust and allows for diversity.

1.1 Social networks

People have strong, resilient social networks.

1.2 Trust in people

People have a high level of trust in others.

1.3 Acceptance of diversity

People accept individuals with other values and lifestyles as equal members of society.

Domains of Cohesion (2)



2. Connectedness

promotes cohesion through positive identification with the country, a high level of confidence in its institutions and a perception that social conditions are fair.

2.1 Identification

People feel strongly connected to their country and identify with it.

2.2 Trust in institutions

People have a high level of confidence in social and political institutions.

2.3 Perception of fairness

People believe that society's goods are fairly distributed and that they are being treated fairly.

Domains of Cohesion (3)



3. Focus on the common good

promotes cohesion through actions and attitudes that help the weak, are in keeping with society's rules and allow for a collaborative approach to the organization of society.

3.1 Solidarity and helpfulness

People feel responsibility for others and are willing to help them.

3.2 Respect for social rules

People abide by the fundamental rules of society.

3.3 Civic participation

People participate in society and political life and enter into public discussions.

Data

- Exclusively secondary data
- Representative cross-sectional comparative surveys
 - e.g. GWP, WVS, ESS, EQLS, EB
- Expert ratings, international institutions
 - e.g. ICRG

- Time periods

1.
1989 to 1995

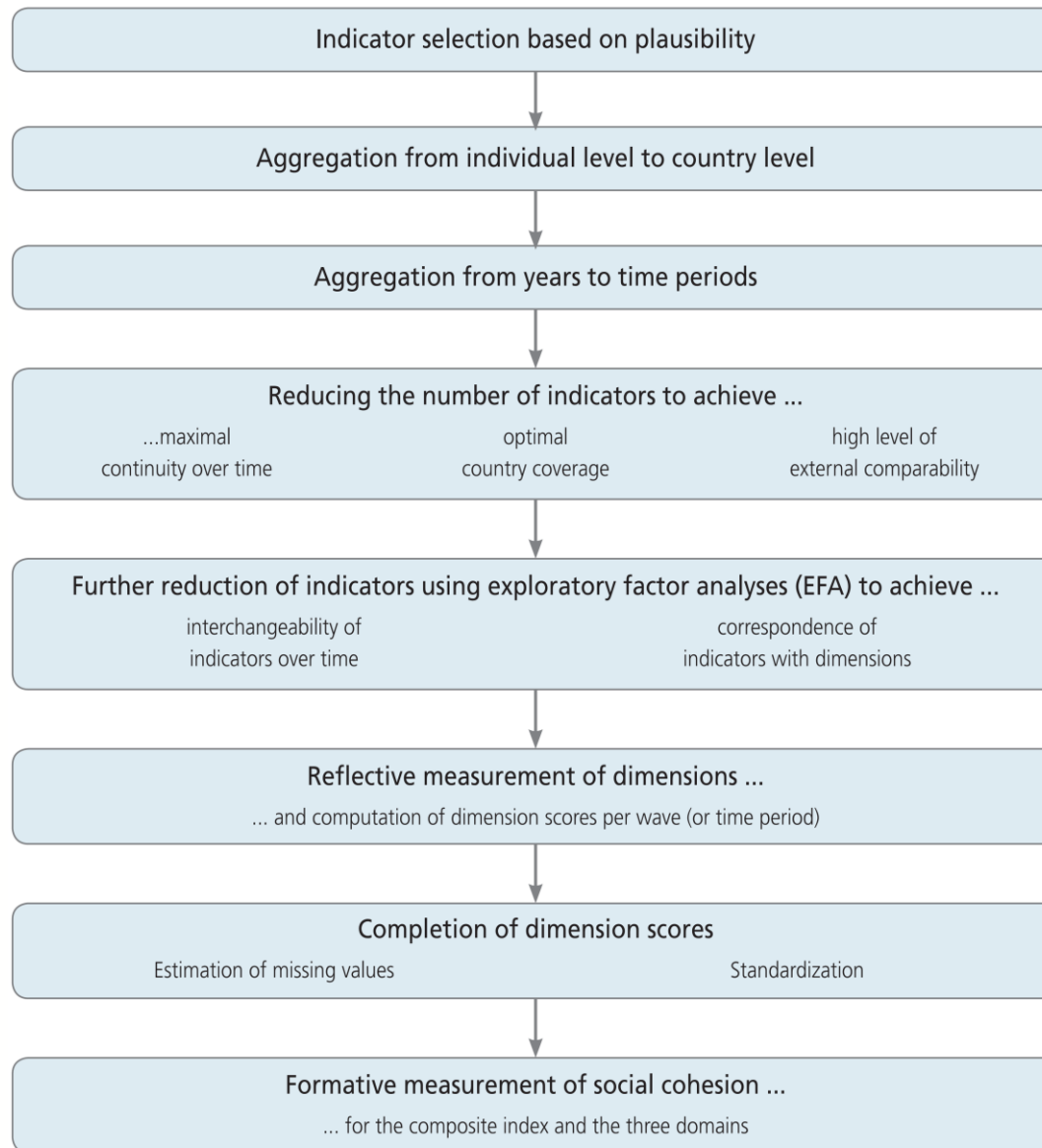
2.
1996 to 2003

3.
2004 to 2008

4.
2009 to 2012

- International comparison: 34 modern societies

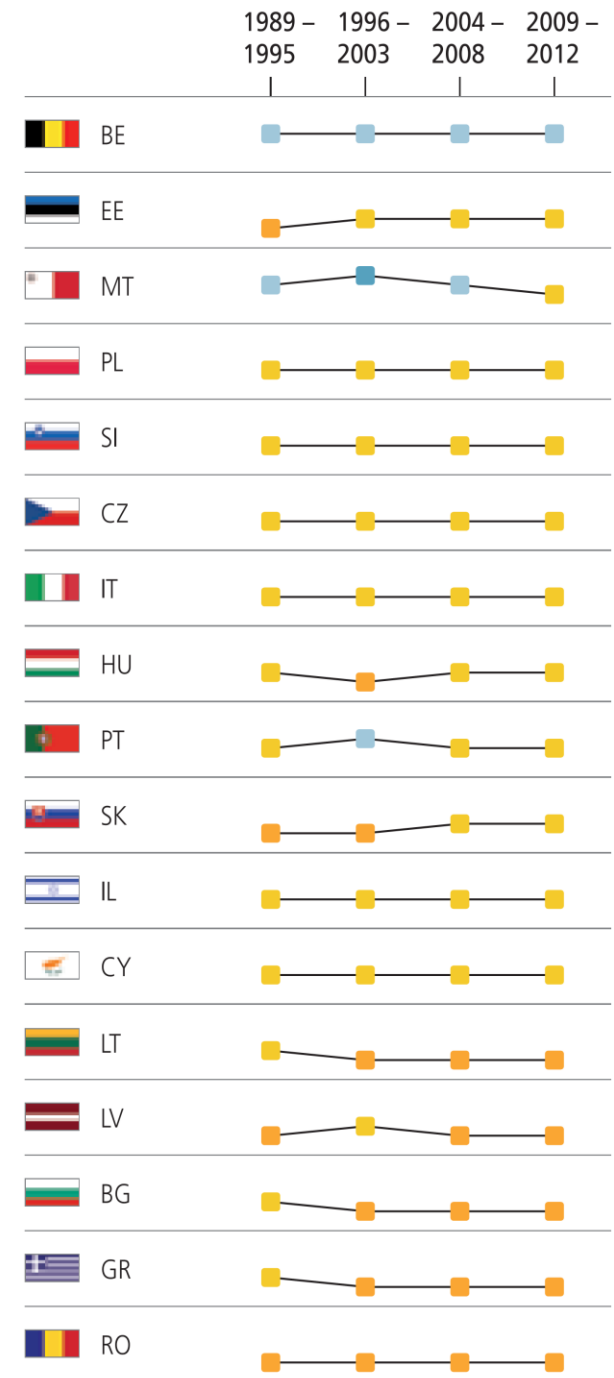
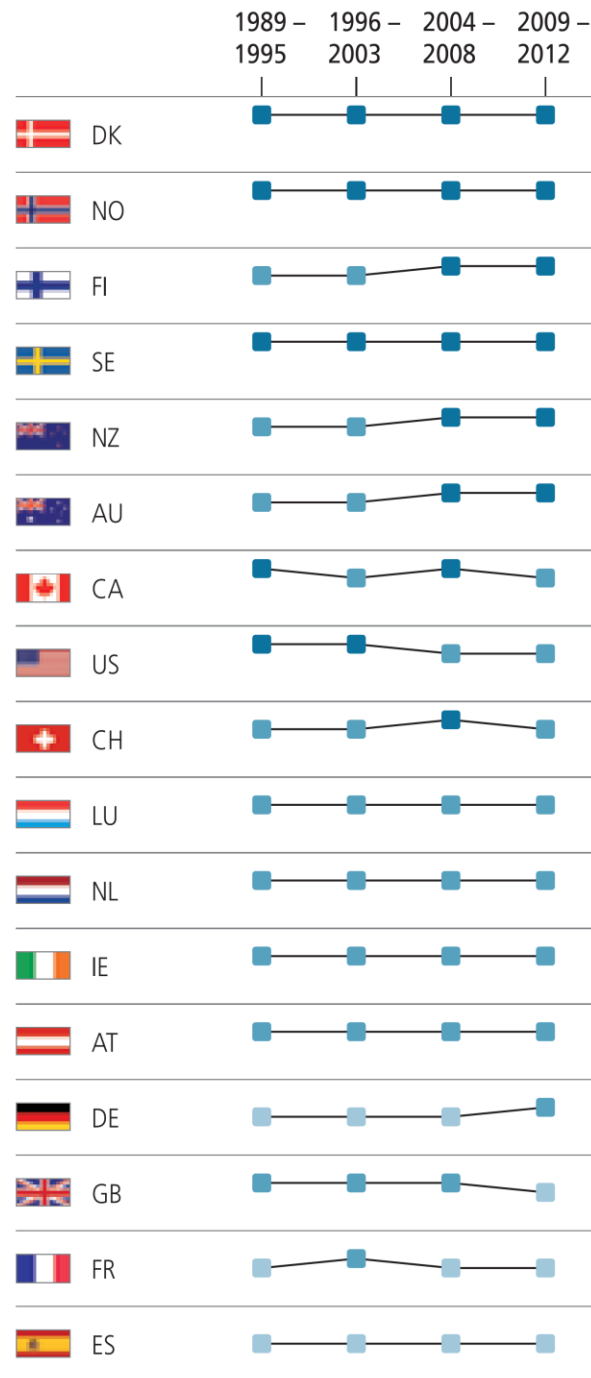
Methods



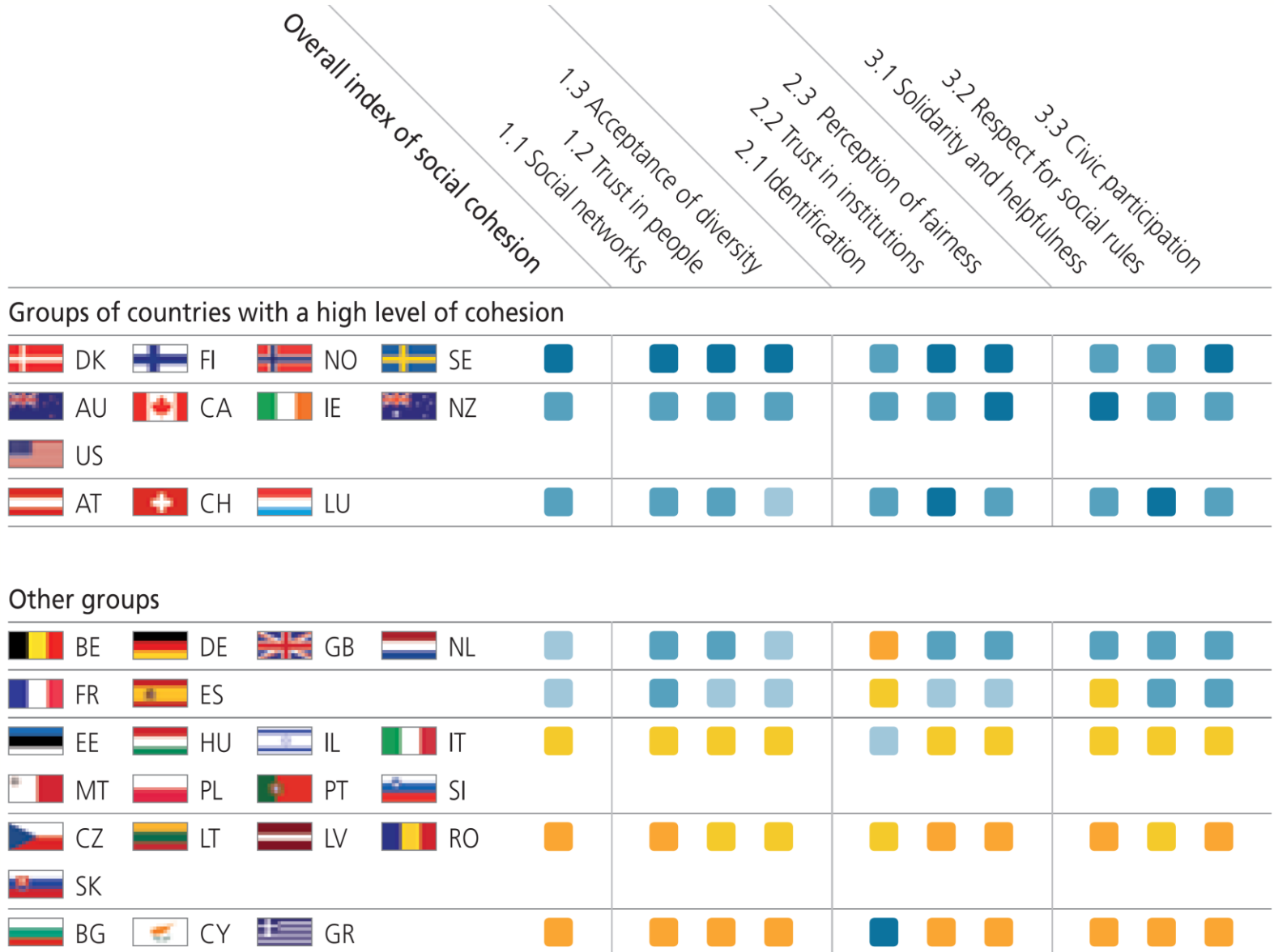
Degree of Cohesion (2009-2012)



Degree of Cohesion Over Time



“Regimes” of Social Cohesion



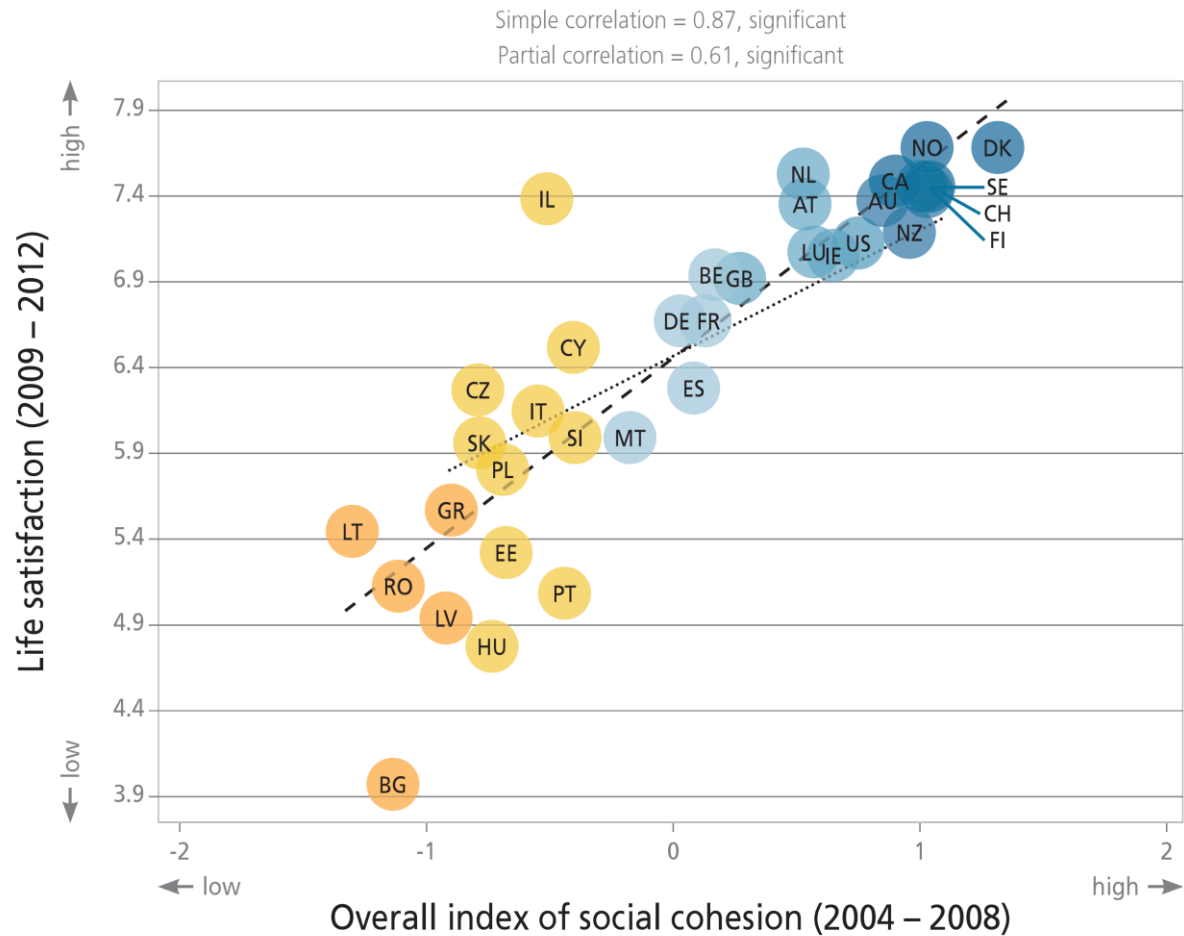
Determinants of Cohesion

- Enhancing cohesion:
 - National income (GDP per capita PPP)
 - Human development
 - Knowledge economy
 - Post-materialist values
- Reducing cohesion:
 - Income inequality
 - Poverty
 - Importance of religion
- No effect:
 - Migration, ethnic fractionalization
 - Welfare state generosity
 - Globalization

Cohesion and Subjective Well-being

- More cohesive = happier?
- Mixed blessing (dark side of cohesion)?
- Cohesion equally important for **rich and poor societies**?
- Cohesion equally important for **more/less vulnerable groups**?
- Joint impact with **inequality**

More Cohesive, More Satisfied With Life



--- Simple linear correlation

..... Linear correlation adjusted for GDP

| Bertelsmann Stiftung

Cohesion Enhances Which SWB Components?

Well-being dimension	Cohesion	Affluence	Inequality
Life evaluation	↑	○	○
Psychological functioning	↑	↓	○
Social well-being	↑	○	○

Notes:

Results based on multi-level regression analysis with N (countries) = 27 and N (individuals) = 35,153. Full results are provided in Column “M+C” of Tables A-2 to A-4 of the Appendix.

○ denotes a non-significant effect; ↑ denotes a significant positive effect (“increases the respective well-being indicator”); ↓ a significant negative effect (“decreases the respective well-being indicator”). Green/red colour denotes whether an effect can be evaluated as positive or negative, i.e. leading to higher/lower well-being.

Cohesion More Important in Rich Countries

Well-being dimension	Poor countries (AC-12)	Rich countries (EU-15)
Life evaluation	↑	↑
Psychological functioning	○	↑
Social well-being	○	○

Note:

Results based on multi-level regression analysis. AC-12: N (countries) = 12 and N (individuals) = 12,883. EU-15: N (countries) = 15 and N (individuals) = 22,270.

Full results are provided in Table A-5 of the Appendix.

○ denotes a non-significant effect; ↑ denotes a significant positive effect (“increases the respective well-being indicator”); ↓ a significant negative effect (“decreases the respective well-being indicator”). Green/red colour denotes whether an effect can be evaluated as positive or negative, i.e. leading to higher/lower well-being.

Cohesion Mediates/Moderates Inequality Effect

Well-being dimension	Initial effect of inequality (controlling for affluence)	Cohesion as a mediator of the inequality effect	Cohesion as a moderator of the inequality effect
Life evaluation	No	No	No
Psychological functioning	Yes	Yes	Yes (if high cohesion)
Social well-being	No	No	Yes (if high cohesion)

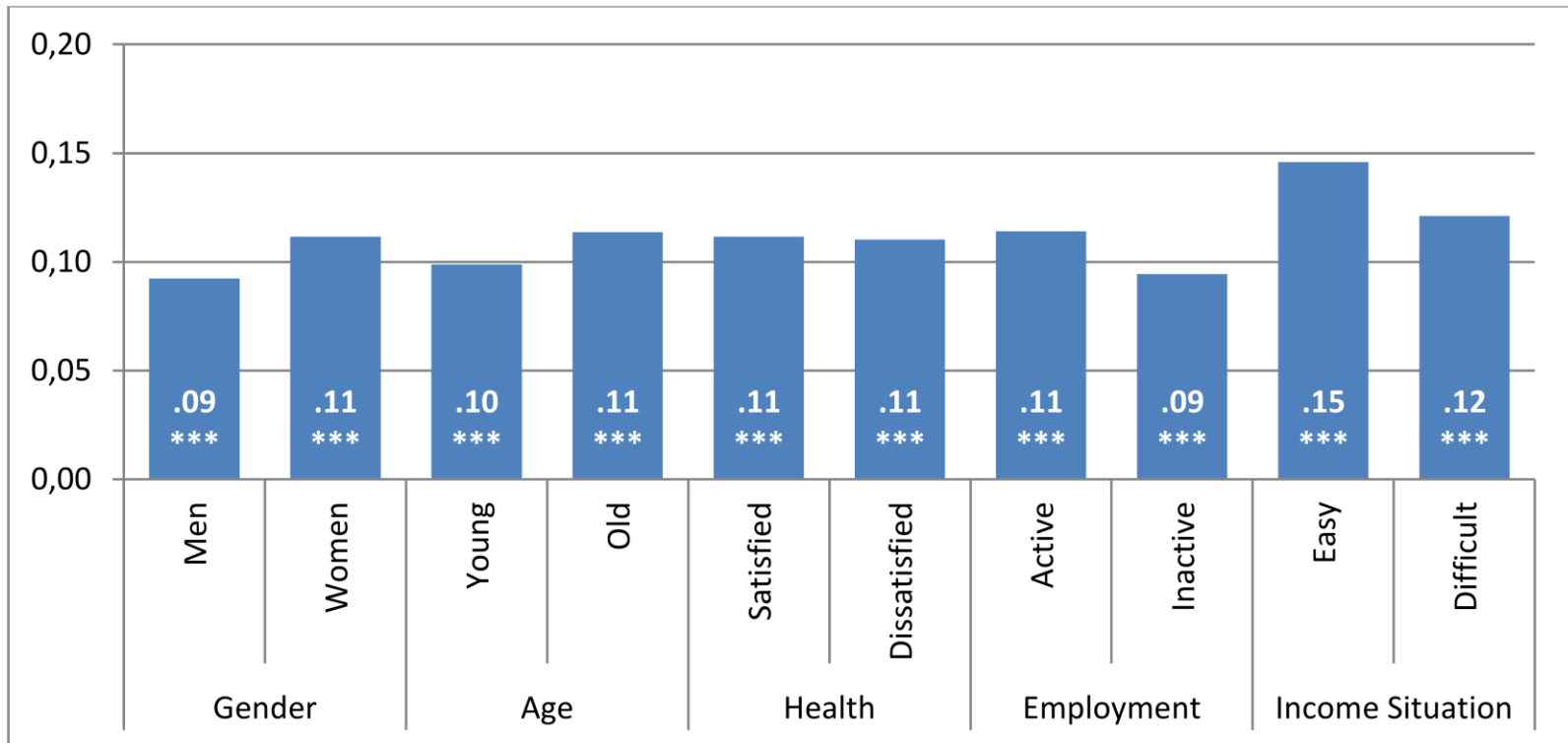
Note:

Results based on multi-level regression analysis. Initial effect and Mediation analysis: N (countries) = 27 and N (individuals) = 35,153. Moderation analysis, low cohesion: N (countries) = 15 and N (individuals) = 18,125; high cohesion: N (countries) = 12 and N (individuals) = 17,028.

Full results for the mediation analyses are provided in Columns “M” and “M+C” of Tables A-2 to A-4 of the Appendix. Full results for the moderation analyses are provided in Table A-6 of the Appendix. Green/red colour denotes whether an effect can be evaluated as positive or negative, i.e. leading to higher/lower well-being.

Cohesion Good For All

Standardized effect of cohesion on SWB for various groups



Notes: Significance of the estimates in the case of two-sided tests: * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

The Methaphor Again



Summary

- Cohesion:
 - Characterizes the “quality of society”
 - Rather stable phenomenon over time
 - Strongest in Europe’s North and weakest in Europe’s South-East
 - Mainly depends on economic conditions, equality, and value climate
- We are happier together
 - Individuals happier in more cohesive societies
 - Cohesion good for all
- Yet
 - Cohesion more important for SWB in richer countries
 - Cohesion doubles the trouble of inequality



JACOBS
UNIVERSITY

| Bertelsmann **Stiftung**

Thank you!

Georgi Dragolov
g.dragolov@jacobs-university.de

www.social-cohesion.net